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ABSTRACT

Based on interviews with placement officers at more than 24 colleges in New England and information sought from corporate placement officials and college seniors, the job outlook for many 1975 New England college graduates seemed favorable according to early spring indications. Campus recruiting, as measured by the number of firms scheduling campus visits, was fairly active in late 1974 but worsened as the economic downturn continued in 1975. In areas of occupation, demand for most engineers was relatively favorable, there was a strong demand for accounting majors, and some encouragement for general business graduates, but liberal arts and science graduates faced a less favorable outlook. There were favorable opportunities in the health field, while teaching jobs continued to be scarce; other fields offered mixed opportunities. Other fields/topics discussed in this report are agriculture, communication, computer sciences, conservation, library science, oceanography and ocean engineering, pharmacists, urban planning, criminal justice, associate degree graduates, effects of affirmative action plans, effects of the energy crisis on 1975 recruiting, and the search for a job. (TA)

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EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR 1975 COLLEGE GRADUATES IN NEW ENGLAND

REGIONAL REPORT NUMBER 75-5

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FOREWORD

This report is based on interviews with placement officers at more than two dozen colleges in New England. In addition information was sought from corporate placement officials and students in their final year. This bulletin was written by Gordon E. Bowen of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Boston Regional Office. He was assisted in the data collection phase of the study by Thomas J. Williams of the same office.

WENDELL D. MACDONALD

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EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK FOR 1975

COLLEGE GRADUATES IN NEW ENGLAND

I. SUMMARY

Despite the national and regional downturn in the economy, the job outlook for many 1975 New England college graduates appeared favorable according to early spring indications. For others, however, the economics of supply and demand may dictate acceptance of many starting positions requiring something less than the education and training which they bring to the job world. Campus recruiting, as measured by the number of firms scheduling campus visits, was fairly active in late 1974 but worsened as the economic downturn continued into 1975.

Placement directors report numerous cancellations of scheduled campus visits by corporate recruiters and declines in numbers of openings to be filled. Recruiters for the Big Three automobile makers, for example, cancelled many of their campus visits. Several directors, however, were quite hopeful that recruiting would pick up again later in the Spring of 1975. Since jobs are being accepted at a high rate there is also a tendency for recruiters to reduce the number of job offers to prevent more acceptances than required. For the college senior who has not received a firm job offer this means a need to continue to seek interviews. Since campus

interviewing is being curtailed by corporations, graduates may have to resort to "knocking on doors" and selling prospective employers on their potential value to the firms.

II. DEMAND FOR MOST ENGINEERS RELATIVELY FAVORABLE

Despite the recession, one encouraging aspect of this years' recruiting season is the demand for engineering graduates throughout the United States and in New England as well. Over recent years the number of engineering graduates has lessened bringing supply closer to demand this year with some placement directors expecting more openings than could be filled. Any expected shortage, however, has probably been narrowed by the continuing economic slide. Favorable prospects continue for graduating chemical engineers as chemical and petro-chemical firms express interest in virtually every graduate with such education. One result has been increased salary offers to chemical engineering graduates with starting annual salaries this spring reaching $13,000. Some of the demand for new chemical engineers is due to their numerical scarcity as graduates in this discipline are fewer than in many other engineering specialties. Electrical engineers are in strong demand in areas of the country where the electronics industry is concentrated. Firms are also seeking graduates in mechanical and industrial engineering so that most graduates in these areas should have job offers by commencement. Civil engineering is one major discipline where job opportunities are fewer since openings in this field are closely related to the currently depressed conditions in the construction industry. Some consulting engineering firms have laid off engineers hired in 1973 and 1974. Recruitment of civil engineers is also hurt by the cutbacks

in environmental protection plans, some of which are casualties of the energy shortage. Any improvement in construction may be expected to improve the job outlook for civil engineers.

III. STRONG DEMAND FOR ACCOUNTING MAJORS

As in the past several years the demand for accounting graduates is strong in 1975. The state of the economy, however, has influenced students at some schools to anxiously seek places on interviewing schedules. Accounting is a profession in which job offers seem closely geared to student grade averages with high grades a virtual guarantee of employer interest. This tendency in accounting is a result of the intensity with which leading C. P. A. firms actively seek the outstanding accounting graduates each year. There are indications that the recruiting plans of leading C. P. A. firms this year have remained about the same as in 1974 although offering salaries of $12,000 are slightly above last year. Many of the positions being recruited for are outside New England. Accountants offered positions in industries other than C. P. A. firms are generally in the $11,000-$11,500 range to start. Accounting graduates with masters degrees are in heavy demand with salaries in the $14,500 to $15,000 range. The most eagerly sought accounting graduates appear to be those from schools specializing in accounting and requiring many semester hours in the subject as a degree requirement. Job offers to seniors seem to be accepted much more quickly than in the past and the acceptance rate is considerably higher this Spring than last.

IV. SOME ENCOURAGEMENT FOR GENERAL BUSINESS GRADUATES

The current economic downturn will adversely affect the job outlook for graduates majoring in marketing, retailing, advertising and general business subjects. In past years a major source of jobs for graduates in these fields traditionally has been in management training programs established by major retailers, insurance companies, financial instutions and others. Some firms would normally hire dozens of graduates each year and move them through training programs, formal or informal, before establishing them in career occupations such as buyers, public relations specialists, underwriters, personnel workers, claim examiners, marketing research, advertising account executives, credit officers, etc. As the economy turns down, however, among the first cutbacks are often management training programs. This translates into cancellation of visits to college campuses and fewer job offers this year. This spring a common story told by placement directors was the cancellation of visits by major retailers, banks, and insurance companies as the curtailment in training programs has made itself felt.

Despite some expressions of pessimism there are still jobs available for numbers of business graduates. Although there are fewer openings and fewer firms doing the recruiting, many firms are hiring business graduates. However, many degree earners in these programs will have to seek their own jobs by direct personal search.

V. LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCE GRADUATES FACE LESS FAVORABLE OUTLOOK

One placement director noted, "the liberal arts graduate has always had a tough time getting a job and the recession just makes it more difficult than normal". Most placement directors warn that liberal arts majors face difficulties in the job hunt after graduation.

The liberal arts graduate in the humanities and social and behavioral sciences will find the job market especially tight. Majors in english, history, political science, sociology, economics, psychology, languages and philosophy are not in many instances regarded by prospective employers as fully professionally qualified with only a bachelors' degree. The curtainment and outright cancellation of many management training programs has limited channels of opportunity which in the past often attracted and favored liberal arts graduates. One unfortunate aspect for liberal arts seniors as well as many others, is the inevitable discouragement which results from not finding jobs commensurate with their education and the alternative of accepting substitute work. Some examples listed were taxi drivers, typists, clerks, operators, laborers, short order cooks, waiters or waitresses. Another disadvantage suffered by liberal arts graduates are the frequently lower salary offers attached to the job offers they do receive. Present salary offerings for nontechnical liberal arts graduates are in the $700-$800 monthly range with some offers considerably lower. Some liberal arts graduates, particularly those with degrees in social work, will find employment with various governmental and private agencies involved in welfare and poverty programs.

Graduates with a bachelors degree in a scientific field -- chemistry,

physics, biology and also mathematics are better positioned for a career start and, as a result, are offered starting salaries in the $800-$950 per month range. These majors must actively seek employment but their chance of success seems greater. Mathematicians, especially with computer related courses, are being accepted as trainees in computer programming or actuarial work. The pharmaceutical and chemical firms seek a few chemistry majors to fill vacancies created by normal turnover. Majors in life sciences with a bachelors' degree, however, will be fortunate to find work in their specialty since supply exceeds demand by a wide margin in this field. This is true also of graduates with baccalaureate degrees in physics.

One aspect of the many-degrees educational system is that a graduate with a bachelors' degree in psychology may not be a psychologist nor does a bachelors' degree in mathematics make one a mathematician in the eyes of the recruiter. An advanced degree thus becomes almost a necessity if one pursues a career as a biologist, chemist or in many other disciplines of liberal arts and sciences. To teach full time at the college level, which is the ultimate goal of many students studying in these disciplines, the possesion of a PhD is virtually mandatory in most but not all higher education institutions. The unfortunate circumstance is that the supply of graduates with advanced degrees in liberal arts exceeds the demand for college level teachers so that the number of career opportunities are limited in higher education.

There are partial answers to the dilemna. Many placement officials do conduct career guidance programs which emphasize the need for freshmen

to plan their courses so they will not be overspecialized in a field where job openings will be scarce. By carefully choosing a minor field of study a student can present courses and training that may be relevant to the needs of a prospective employer.

VI. FAVORABLE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HEALTH FIELD

Both at present and in the forseeable future the outlook is favorable for 2 year and 4 year graduates in the health field. There is a continuous need for registered nurses and no graduate with a nursing degree should be without a job offer especially if willing to relocate to metropolitan areas where health facilities are concentrated. Because of the extensive training required there continues to be a heavy demand for phsyicians, dentists, chiropractors, optometrists, podiatrists and veterinarians. In addition to that for registered nurses there is a continuous demand for dieticians, pharmacists, hospital administrators, sanitarians, medical laboratory technicians and for various types of therapists who have a bachelors' degree or better. Demand is equally good for the many kinds of technicians who have two years of post secondary school training.

VII. TEACHING JOBS CONTINUE TO BE SCARCE

Elementary and secondary school teacher openings will be very difficult to find for members of the graduating class of 1975. Because of fewer births in the sixities, elementary enrollments have been declining since they peaked nationally at 32 million in 1967. This fact, of course, has a sharp impact on the demand for teachers.

New teachers are still needed, however, to replace those who retire,

die, or leave the profession for other reasons and the recent graduate with current training and hence a lower beginning salary may be favored over the older teacher who seeks to return to the profession. For the graduate willing to locate away from the big cities there may be openings that are not widely advertised, particularly in substitute teaching where excellent experience can be obtained. Teaching jobs overseas generally require a few years experience but Australia was recently hiring inexperienced graduates while England has been interested in those with science and math backgrounds. Specialties such as speech pathologists, industrial arts, math, vocational-technical subjects and special education have a brighter outlook than English, art, music and history. Recent Federal guidelines placing an increased emphasis on womens' sports should bring a need for additional women in the field of physical education. Because of tight budgets at all levels of government, however, many school boards are presently reluctant to add new positions even where the need exists. Slack is taken up by combining positions or having administrative personnel carry a class schedule.

More than one placement director noted that a graduate dedicated to a career in education could eventually find a job in the teaching field. Dedicated students are often those who find summer work as unpaid volunteers or at low pay with handicapped children, in childrens' hospitals, or as aides to teach remedial reading. Such experience becomes invaluable when the time arrives for full-time employment. Experience can also be gained in working for such volunteer agencies as Action and Vista for a year or two after graduation.

VII. OTHER FIELDS OFFER MIXED OPPORTUNITIES

Each year there are many graduates with degrees in fields not normally receiving the attention of campus recruiters. The brief summaries noted below relate to these fields where there are relatively few graduates or where survey contacts do not provide a more detailed outlook.

AGRICULTURE: Graduates with degrees in agricultural business, agricultural economics and agricultural engineering have relatively little trouble finding employment due to the growing trend for large business enterprises to operate farms. Graduates with degrees in animal and plant science, however, have a more difficult time in finding employment but often find positions in a related or even an unrelated field.

COMMUNICATION: Jobs in radio and TV broadcasting are very tight since there is limited expansion in this field. The same is true for journalism graduates where supply greatly exceeds demand. Graduates in both these fields must actively seek employment on a nationwide basis and be willing to start at salaries considerably below those of many of their classmates in other fields.

COMPUTER SCIENCE: Although few of the colleges visited grant degrees in computer science, the students who concentrate their studies in this area have a very good chance at finding careers in this occupational sector.

CONSERVATION: The few graduates in such fields as soil conservation, natural resources, forestry, etc., will have difficulty finding

career opportunities related to their education, especially in New England. Budget tightening by Federal and state governments often results in a freeze on hiring which otherwise would benefit graduates in these programs. Budget and energy problems have also reduced the growth of environmental protection programs and the positions that would have otherwise been created.

LIBRARY SCIENCE: Competition is very keen for these jobs and graduates are at a disadvantage without a Master's Degree. Willingness to relocate out of large metropolitan areas is an essential ingredient in finding a suitable opening.

OCEANOGRAPHY AND OCEAN ENGINEERING: With few graduates in these related fields the outlook is favorable, particularly for those with advanced degrees. Demand in these occupations has been aided by the energy crisis and the increasing attention being paid to the oceans and what lies beneath them.

PHARMACISTS: Graduates with the higher grades can usually land the higher paying jobs with clinics, hospitals and as representatives for large pharmaceutical firms. Pharmacists are always in demand by the retail drug stores although routine duties have been cited as a sometimes discouraging factor. Eventual ownership of a drug store is a goal of most pharmacists working at the retail level.

URBAN PLANNING AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE: The small but increasing

number of graduates in these two fields have the major handicap of budget tightening in the governmental agencies where most of these graduates would expect to find employment.

IX. ASSOCIATE DEGREE GRADUATES

Generally, the Associate Degree graduate seeks employment in the same broad arena as his counterpart with a Bachelors' Degree. Those who have degrees as health, engineering, or chemical technicians, or who have a degree in computer science fare generally better than recipients of an Associate of Arts degree in the humanities. Those who receive a degree in secretarial science will have little trouble finding employment. Two factors that do differentiate the graduate with an Associate of Arts degree from those with bachelors' degrees is that the former are generally offered lower slaaries and this results in much less geographic mobility. The associate degree graduate who is entering the job market is faced with the same economic conditions and is helped or hindered in job-seeking by his particular field of study just like the 4-year graduate. The average receiver af an associate degree is sometimes further disadvantaged in the job hunt by his or her age -- usually two or three years younger than those with bachelors degrees.

X. EFFECTS OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PLANS

There is little doubt that corporations are seeking females and minorities in growing numbers to meet affirmative action goals. Competition by employers is especially keen for females and minorities who are graduating from programs where white males have predominated in the past such

as engineering and accounting. Although placement officers pride themselves on being completely unbiased in arranging interviews, some point out that the recruiters usually make sure that they interview most black and female candidates when visiting campuses. In some cases this means making arrangements with campus organizations such as the Society of Women Engineers or a campus Afro American group.

As a result of affirmative action plans recruiters are now looking more closely at colleges with predominantly female enrollment. Some firms which have been successfully recruiting at women's colleges for years are continuing these efforts even though they may have cancelled visits to other schools. Other firms for the first time have begun recruiting at women dominated colleges as one avenue to meeting affirmative action goals. One placement official reported that women engineering graduates were being offered higher starting salaries than male engineering graduates.

XI. EFFECTS OF THE ENERGY CRISIS ON 1975 RECRUITING

The most visible effect of the energy crisis on 1975 college recruiting is the demand for chemical engineers by the chemical and petro-chemical firms. There is also a demand for geology majors particularly for those willing to relocate. The cutback in recruiting by public utilities appears directly related to the energy shortage. Electric utilities, for example, caught between the need for growth and the environmental factors have simply cancelled many campus visits this year.

More subtle effects are apparent if the indirect effects of the energy crisis are considered. Petro dollars and how this money is to be

handled and invested is an increasingly important problem. Financial institutions may seek to recruit more finance majors especially those with advanced degrees and who may have taken specialized courses in international finance. There were some speculation that courses in Arabic may become more common electives at colleges.

XII. THE SEARCH FOR A JOB

Some placement officers were optimistic that any college graduate with reasonably good grades could successfully find employment. The secret of successful job-hunting in 1975, they suggest, is to seek out and impress employers, particularly those in areas away from the larger metropolitan areas. An oft repeated phrase of the placement directors is that many graduates are unwilling to leave the Boston area. This may seriously limit their career chances and also places them in direct competition with thousands of earlier graduates who also refused to relocate. College placement officers in the greater Boston area have a fund of evidence that a very large proportion of the students who fill out applications indicate an unwillingness to move to a new location. They add that a graduate who does leave his own metropolitan area will have a better chance of returning to a job in his preferred area after a few years of experience working elsewhere.

Another point made by many placement officials is that firms who need only a few graduates this year and have, therefore, cancelled costly campus recruiting programs may be still interested in interviewing graduates who walk in the door. Some state governments, including New York and South Carolina, have announced openings but have no travel funds to

send recruiters to college campuses. An earlier Bureau of Labor Statistics study of how the 1972 college graduates found jobs shows that over 42 percent were successful by applying directly to employers. Graduates, therefore, should not overlook either private employment agencies, newspaper advertisements and most importantly personal visits to employers. The task of finding work in 1975 will be up to the student as much as to the college placement office.